

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

1
Ag 84 Pro

PA 1248



Legacy
for the Future
**A Dialogue on
American
Agriculture**

TOP SECRET

FEB
1983

TOP SECRET

Legacy for the Future

A Dialogue on American Agriculture

On March 12, 1979, Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland called for a national dialogue on the economic and social issues that affect the structure of American agriculture and rural communities.

He believes we need to reexamine the forces which have shaped agriculture as we know it today. Thus, he has launched a broad-based public discussion of these issues.

The immediate goal is to collect and evaluate information about the current structure of agriculture and the forces that affect it.

The ultimate goal is to establish national policies and programs that will best promote the kind of agriculture and rural life Americans want for the future.

WHY IS 'STRUCTURE' IMPORTANT?

The economic and social structure of agriculture directly affects all Americans. The income farmers make . . . the jobs of people in the marketing chain . . . the quality of life in rural communities . . . the price of food . . . even the value of the dollar in foreign trade are affected by our food and agriculture system and how it operates.

Thus, the consequences of a given farm structure pose crucially important issues of public policy.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

The term “structure” is an economist’s word used to describe such things as the number, size and control of farms; the relationship between farmers and their suppliers and markets; and the other institutions that make up our food and agriculture system or influence how it operates.

This system has been formed by many forces over the years. Some of these are the availability of land and water; changes in machinery, plant varieties and animal breeding; transportation; energy supplies and prices; financial credit and its costs; environmental concerns, and farm programs and policies.

We are living in a period when strong and conflicting demands are being made on our agriculture system and the rural communities in which it operates. The purpose of this dialogue, therefore, is to discuss the type of “structure” and policy that can best meet the needs of farmers, rural communities and the American public in the years to come.

The broad areas of concern are listed below. In considering each of these, you might ask yourself: What is the situation in my area? What brought it about? How has it affected my community? Looking to the future, should changes be made? If so, what changes and how?

- Land ownership, control and tenancy.
- Barriers to entering and leaving farming.
- Production efficiency, size of farms, and the role of technology.
- Government programs.
- Tax and credit policies.

- Farm input supply system.
- Farm product marketing system.
- Present and future energy supplies.
- Environmental concerns including conservation and use of soil and water.
- Returns to farmers.
- Costs to consumers.
- Quality of life in rural areas.

WHAT'S BEING DONE?

First, USDA is compiling background "issue papers" to provide basic information on the major factors that affect structure. These will be published in a booklet by November 1979. Another publication will highlight structural change and regional variations.

Second, critical areas of research where factual information is lacking are being identified. This information will be developed by USDA agencies, universities, foundations and other groups.

Third, a broad base of organizations and individuals with an interest in the economic and social aspects of agriculture and rural life is being asked to discuss the issues and contribute ideas and recommendations.

PUBLIC MEETINGS SCHEDULED

Ten public meetings have been scheduled for Secretary Bergland to hear the views of individuals and organizations. They are:

Nov. 27 — Montpelier, Vt.

Tavern Motor Inn, 100 State Street
(States covered will be Conn., Maine,
Mass., N. H., N. J., N. Y., Pa., R. I., and
Vt.)

Nov. 28 — Fayetteville, N.C.

Bordeaux Motor Inn, 1707 Owen Drive
(States covered will be Del., Md., N. C.,
S. C., Va., and W. Va.)

Nov. 29 — Huntsville, Ala.

Huntsville Hilton Inn, 401 Williams
Street (States covered will be Ala., Fla.,
Ga., Ky., Miss., and Tenn.)

Dec. 4 — Sioux City, Iowa

Marina Inn, 4th and B Streets, South
Sioux City, Neb. (States covered will be
Iowa, Minn., Neb., N. Dak, and S. Dak.)

Dec. 5 — Sedalia, Mo.

Convention Hall, Liberty Park (States
covered will be Ark., Kans., and Mo.)

Dec. 6 — Wichita Falls, Tex.

Wichita Falls Activities Center, 10th
and Indiana Streets (States covered will
be La., Okla., and Tex.)

Dec. 11 — Denver, Colo.

Regency Inn, 3900 Elati Street (States
covered will be Ariz., Colo., N. Mex.,
Utah, and Wyo.)

Dec. 12 — Spokane, Wash.

Ridpath Motor Inn, 515 West First
Street (States covered will be Alaska,
Idaho, Mont., Ore., and Wash.)

Dec. 13 — Fresno, Calif.

Sheraton Inn, I-99 at West Clinton
(States covered will be Calif., Hawaii,
and Nev.)

Dec. 18 — Lafayette, Ind.

Howard Johnson's East, 4343 State
Road 26 East at I-65 (States covered
will be Ill., Ind., Mich., Ohio and Wis.)

HOW CAN YOU TAKE PART?

Secretary Bergland will preside at each of these all-day meetings, so he can hear personally the concerns of people around the Nation. The program for each meeting will include time to hear from scheduled speakers, discussion between the Secretary and these speakers, and an opportunity for people from the audience to make brief comments or ask questions.

To permit as many people as possible to speak—and allow “open mike” time for brief comments from the audience—each scheduled speaker will be limited to 5 minutes. Longer, written statements may be submitted for the meeting record.

At some meetings there may not be enough time for comments by everyone who asks to be a scheduled speaker. Every effort will be made to select scheduled speakers so there will be a wide range of interests represented.

If you would like to be one of these scheduled speakers, you should request time on the program of the public meeting covering your area *as soon as possible*. Send your request to:

Project Coordinator
Structure of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250

Please include your name, mailing address, telephone number, organization (if you will be representing one), and a brief identification of the issues you want to discuss. Scheduled speakers will be notified in advance as to the time they are to appear on the program.

If you are unable to attend one of the public meetings, send us your ideas and views in writing on the issues that are important to you. These will be made part of the public record and will be studied with other comments from the public.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

A record of the views expressed at the public meetings will be available, and a summary of the testimony and written materials contributed to USDA will be published in 1980.

Your contribution is important. Study the issues which interest or affect you most . . . stimulate discussions among your friends and neighbors . . . encourage your local organizations to sponsor public debates and seminars . . . take part in one of the 10 public meetings or send us your ideas in writing . . . become actively involved!

To be successful and truly represent public opinion, this dialogue needs the widest possible participation. It needs your views and ideas to help shape the future of American agriculture and the development of rural communities.

For more information, write to the Project Coordinator, or contact your State or County Extension or other USDA offices.



POSTAGE AND FEES PAID
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE
AGR 101

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Washington, D.C. 20250
OFFICIAL BUSINESS
Penalty for Private Use - \$300